

Message Text

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TAGS: ELAB, CA

SUBJ: CLC DAY OF PROTEST

REF: 76 OTTAWA 4035

1. ALBERTA'S 100 THOUSAND UNIONIZED WORKERS GAVE BUT LUKEWARM SUPPORT TO THE CLC'S OCTOBER 14 NATIONAL "DAY OF PROTEST". SOME ONE THOUSAND UNION MEMBERS STAGED DOWNTOWN PARADE IN EDMONTON WHILE ANOTHER 800 OR SO WORKERS, CALGARY TENANTS ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, NDP SUPPORTERS AND MISCELLANEOUS STUDENTS HELD RALLY AT MEWATA STADIUM IN CALGARY. 500 PROTESTERS ALSO TURNED UP AT ALBERTA LEGISLATIVE BUILDING. WHILE THERE WERE ISOLATED PICKET LINES AND WORK STOPPAGES BUSINESS AS USUAL CONDITIONS GENERALLY PREVAILED THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE PROVINCE. WE ESTIMATE THAT PERHAPS AS MANY AS 20 THOUSAND ALBERTANS REMAINED AWAY FROM WORK. BACKING FOR THE PROTEST APPEARED STRONG ONLY IN SUCH PLACES AS HINTON AND FORT MC MURRAY, AREAS WITH HISTORY OF LABOR UNREST. GREATEST UNION SUPPORT FOR PROTEST CAME FROM STEEL WORKERS, MEMBERS OF BUILDING TRADE UNIONS, AND CANADA FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION. GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, WHO REPRESENT SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF ALBERTA UNION MEMBERSHIP, LARGELY REMAINED ON THE JOB.

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WM AS FAR AS WE CAN ASCERTAIN, REACTION OF PRIVATE SECTOR

EMPLOYERS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAS BEEN RESTRAINED. PROVINCIAL TREASURER INDICATED THAT EMPLOYEES WHO DID NOT REPORT FOR WORK WOULD BE DOCKED A DAY'S PAY, BUT WE HAVE HAD NO REPORTS OF DISMISSALS OR UNILATERAL ABROGRATION OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS. ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM IS NOT POPULAR IN ALBERTA, AND WHILE MANY OFFICIALS ARE SYMPATHETIC TO COMPLAINTS ABOUT AIB, THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT AN UNAUTHORIZED STRIKE OR WORK STOPPAGE IS AN APPROPRIATE FORM OF PROTEST.

3. ALBERTA FEDERATION OF LABOR OFFICIALS ARE CALLING OCT. 14 PROTEST "A SUCCESS". THEY ARE ASSERTING THAT "40,000 WORKER PARTICIPATION" WAS DARNED GOOD SHOWING" AND "LARGEST PROVINCIAL DEMONSTRATION IN SOME TIME". SOME LABOR LEADERS COMPLAINED THAT PAY DAY WAS BAD TIME FOR MEN TO STAY AWAY FROM WORK AND THAT COLD WEATHER HAD DAMPENED ENTHUSIASM FOR PROTEST.

4. INDIFFERENCE AND APATHY PROBABLY BEST CHARACTERIZE PROVINCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS CLC'S PROTEST. CONSERVATIVE ALBERTANS HAVE LITTLE USE FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICIES BUT THEY ARE NOT, BY AND LARGE, STRONG SUPPORTERS OF ORGANIZED LABOR. IN OUR VIEW, IMPACT HERE OF OCTOBER 14 PROTEST WILL BE MINIMAL.
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